



SUBCOMMITTEE ON RACE POVERTY AND NEGLECT

Katherine Stoehr, Chair

"In compliance with Chapter 231 of the Public Laws of 1975, notice of this meeting was given by way of notice filed with the Secretary of State, the Trenton Times and the Newark Star Ledger and posted at the Department of State, 125 West State St., 1st Floor, Trenton, New Jersey."

**Please note the meeting was recorded for the transcription of minutes.*

June 24, 2024

Meeting Minutes

Attendance

Katherine Stoehr, Department of Children and Families
Eleanor Gilliam, Department of Children and Families
Wendy Yallowitz, Department of Children and Families
Sonia Moticha, Department of Education
Mary Coogan, Advocates for Children of New Jersey
Dr. Tucker, Pediatric Physician
Patricia Risch, Department of Human Services
Larry Braasch, Department of Human Services
Veronica Ford, Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey

Guests

June Simon, Action Research
Beth Kuenstler, Casey Family Programs
Dana Blackwell, Casey Family Programs

Staff

Bethany D'Amelio, Department of Children and Families

Casey Family Programs Presentation (California)

In recent deliberations, the California Child Welfare Council undertook comprehensive discussions aimed at reforming mandated reporting practices and evolving prevention services, which resulted in the creation of the Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting Task Force.

1. Mandated Reporting Re-evaluation

- The Task Force examined current mandated reporting laws, identifying areas needing precision to prevent improper referrals, part of fulfilling equitable practices.
- Emphasized the reduction of disproportionate surveillance of ethnic minority communities to foster an anti-racist, inclusive environment.

2. Community Pathway Advisory

- The creation of a Community Pathway Advisory Subcommittee underlined new strategies to address systemic inequities, encouraging collaboration between government bodies and community representatives.
 - Recommendations focus on reforming the interface between child protective services and the communities served, rooted in cultural sensitivity and accessibility.
3. Taskforce and Subcommittee Composition
- Representation comprised diverse stakeholders, including legal, healthcare, educational, and community-based organizations, aimed to infuse a broad spectrum of perspectives.
 - Over 100 members from various counties across the state engaged in the reform effort, ensuring a multi-perspective approach to recommendations.

Recommendations

The Task Force put forward 14 key recommendations, grounded in strategic priorities, which include:

- Aligning child welfare practices with broader anti-racist policies.
- Interpreting child abuse and neglect within precise and well-defined parameters to avoid unnecessary child-family separations.
- Promoting informed and culturally appropriate access to resources for mandated reporters and families they serve, thus ensuring agency in decision-making processes.

Conclusion

These discussions reflect a pivotal shift towards embedding equity and effectiveness within the child welfare system. The Task Force envisions these recommendations as blueprints for systemic transformation, setting the course for prevention services that bolster family strengths while addressing challenges.

Subsequent meetings will be scheduled to expand upon these frameworks and their implementation. Residents and stakeholders are encouraged to participate actively in this ongoing dialogue.

Implications

Understanding and implementing these adjustments can lead to significant improvements in child welfare practices, shaping a future in which all communities are supported more justly and effectively. Future areas of interest might include the exploration of funding mechanisms to support these initiatives and cross-state comparisons to learn and adapt best practices.

The Subcommittee provided time for member questions and feedback. The members agreed to table feedback discussion until the July meeting to allow time to think over the information provided and plan discussion points.

Subcommittee membership:

The group discussed using a mindful, targeted recruitment strategy to assure a varied membership that includes lived experience experts.

5-year strategic plan:

The subcommittee reviewed and approved the statement regarding its work focus, which will be included in the plan.

This memo aims to maintain transparency and provide the public with an overview of the task force's recent deliberations. The committee values community input and engagement as we collectively strive to enhance the welfare of children and families across New Jersey. This meeting report was prepared, in part, with the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

For further information or queries, the public can reach out via the contact channels provided by the Department of Children and Families.